

Box 31
Planned?

DRAFT - 10 October 1961

Dear General, I am writing this letter to you in the hope that you will be able to find time to read it before you leave Berlin. I greatly appreciate having you visit me and hearing your views on the preparations and course of action which we might adopt in defense of Western rights in Berlin. Since your departure I have discussed some of these matters again with Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and am now prepared to give you my views on the points at issue.

I recognize that you are both an international commander and a United States commander, with somewhat different responsibilities in these two capacities. However, as the United States is the leader in the NATO Alliance and the primary contributor to its strength, I would not expect the views and attitudes of the United States Government to run contrary to the interests of the Alliance as a whole. Since you are the senior American commander and symbolize the role of the United States in NATO, you have an unusual responsibility in expounding the United States position and convincing our Allies of its soundness.

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With regard to our strategy in Europe and such related matters as a further reinforcement of U.S. forces there, I would like you to make your recommendations to me primarily as the military commander.

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Although I recognize how blended political and military considerations are in these NATO matters, I view you primarily as my military advisor on the European problem, and depend upon my own direct communications with heads of state, Secretary Rusk's contacts with other foreign ministers, and the processes of responsible diplomatic officers as the primary source of my political judgments. With this thought in mind, I would like you to give me your formal recommendations with regard to additional U.S. forces which you may want and the desired schedule for their movement.

With regard to further divisions to Europe, I would feel much more secure in reaching decisions bearing on the use of force if I were assured in advance that the necessary reinforcements were in place in Europe to assure the overall safety of the defensive front while minor military actions are in progress.

In closing, I would revert to my earlier thought that you are uniquely placed to guide and influence our Allies and to explain to them the U.S. thinking on important points of interest to the Alliance. I value your advice and counsel most highly, and invite you to communicate with me freely in order to assist me in forming positions and decisions. I would like your communications to come to me directly, with information to the Secretary of Defense on those matters which primarily affect United States forces.